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# The Roman Temple at Kedesh in Upper Galilee: A Response

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A SERIES of articles in Hebrew and English have been published concerning the surveys and excavations carried out by us at the Roman temple at Kedesh in the Upper Galilee, since 1976. We presented the archaeological material in these articles, along with analysis, comparisons and interpretation. Most of the material was published as a preliminary study, although specific aspects of the Roman temple, such as architectural design, the character of religious worship, deity identification and epigraphic finds, were also discussed by us.[1] In an article published by Jodi Magness, our interpretation of several subjects was criticized.[2]

Magness writes that we have 'overlooked parallel structures in this and other regions'. It should be noted that we have pointed out on several occasions that the temple at Kedesh is the southernmost link in the chain of temples of the Syro-Phoenician region; its architectural design and decoration are linked with the

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1 For the articles published by the authors on the subject, see:

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| Roman Temple | M. Fischer, A. Ovadiah and I. Roll: The Roman Temple at Kedesh, Upper Galilee: A Preliminary Study, *Tel Aviv* 11 (1984), pp. 146–172; |
| Architectural Design | A. Ovadiah, M. Fischer and I. Roll: The Architectural Design of the Roman Temple at Kedesh, *EI* 18 (1985), pp. 353–360 (Hebrew; with English summary on p. 77*); |
| Deity and Cult | A. Ovadiah, M. Fischer and I. Roll: Deity and Cult in the Roman Temple at Kedesh, *Sepher Ze'ev Vilnay*, II, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 168–173 (Hebrew); |
| Inscribed Altar | A. Ovadiah, M. Fischer and I. Roll: An Inscribed Altar from the Roman Temple at Kedesh (Upper Galilee), *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 49 (1982), pp. 155–158; |
| Epigraphic Finds | A. Ovadiah, M. Fischer and I. Roll: The Epigraphic Finds from the Roman Temple at Kedesh in the Upper Galilee, *Tel Aviv* 13–14 (1986–1987), pp. 60–66. |

2 Jodi Magness: Some Observations on the Roman Temple at Kedesh, *IEJ* 40 (1990), pp. 173–181. She refers, however, to only one of the articles published: Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple.

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temples of this region. She also writes that elements of the temple at Kedesh 'strongly suggest that it functioned as an oracular shrine'.[3] This aspect of the temple was strongly emphasized and discussed in detail in our articles.[4]

Contrary to Magness' opinion that 'no remains of stairs or a ramp leading up to it were found',[5] it should be noted that evidence does exist for a stairway or ramp leading up to the threshold of the main doorway: 'Three pairs of holes in the upper third of the façade of the threshold...testify to the possibility of the insertion of metal hooks for supporting the stairway or wooden ramp',[6] which lead to the threshold of the main doorway, as was common in temples in the ancient world.[7]

Magness also misunderstood the function of the grate or screen in the main doorway. She accepts our suggestion regarding the existence of a grate, but speaks about 'some sort of mechanism which allowed the grate to open'.[8] It should be stressed that we did not refer to the subject of the opening or closing of the grate, but rather to the opening of the main entrance doors, which was facilitated by metal or wooden projections in the door-wings to be fitted into the sockets, preserved in the southern doorpost.

The function of the three entrances in the façade of the temple's *cella* was explicitly presented in our articles. The side entrances at Kedesh were used by the priests, while the main entrance, which was blocked by the grate, was meant to allow the worshipper to stand on the threshold to receive the oracle or message from the priest, while viewing the statue or the relief of the deity through the grate.[9]

The detailed and erudite discussion that Magness offers pertaining to Apollo's oracular functions in the Greek and Roman world is irrelevant to the subject of the temple at Kedesh, and therefore we will not relate to this matter here. She compares the absence of roofing in the *cella* of the temple at Kedesh to a similar phenomenon at the temple of Apollo at Didyma.[10] It should be pointed out, however, that the *cella* is mostly unexcavated because of the accumulation of debris within, which has prevented reaching the floor and thereby resolving the problem of the roofing. The width of the *cella* at Kedesh (17.60 m.) does not eliminate the possibility of roofing through the use of wooden transverse beams, rather than columns.

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3 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 173.
4 Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, pp. 152–154, 168; Ovadiah *et al.*, Deity and Cult, pp. 171–172. For the architectural and structural elements related to the oracular aspects of the temple, which are unique in the Roman world, see *ibid.*, p. 172; Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, pp. 153–154.
5 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 173.
6 Ovadiah *et al.*, Architectural Design, pp. 359–360, n. 22.
7 *Ibid.*, pp. 355–356; Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, pp. 151–153.
8 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 174.
9 Ovadiah *et al.*, Architectural Design, p. 355–356; Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, pp. 151–153.
10 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 174.

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Similar examples of this type of roofing are found in several Roman temples in the Syro-Phoenician region.[11] Moreover, the enormous dimensions of the temple at Didyma, compared to those of Kedesh — and particularly the widths of their *cellae* — preclude any comparison of this sort.[12]

As for Magness' claim that the tiles found in the portico of the temple attest that only the portico was roofed, while the *cella* remained unroofed (hypaethral),[13] it must be borne in mind that the destruction of the temple at Kedesh, apparently by the earthquake on 19 May 363 C.E., could have led to many architectural components being scattered throughout the area. The existence of tiles in the portico does not, therefore, prove decisively that only that part of the temple was roofed.

The parallel of the architectural design of the façade of the temple at Kedesh with that of the temple of Apollo at Didyma has been explicitly emphasized by us.[14] Thus, the repeated statement that 'this arrangement (in Didyma — the authors) of two small doorways flanking a large central doorway with raised threshold corresponds so closely with that at Kedesh that they must have functioned in the same way' is superfluous.[15] Her statement about the oracular functions of the temple at Kedesh and its similarity to the temple at Didyma has also been covered by us.[16]

Magness' identification of the deity of the temple at Kedesh is based on what we have already written.[17] She, however, attributes the temple at Kedesh to both Baalshamin and Apollo,[18] and discusses the cult of Apollo and its oracular aspects in length, without proving that the temple at Kedesh was actually dedicated to this god.[19]

Regarding the reliefs, which are carved on the coffers and the modillion of one of the cornices of the portico entablature, depicting a cithara, a basin standing on a tripod and a crescent with a star,[20] it should be noted that we not only described them, but discussed their significance as well.[21] Indeed, the cithara and the tripod are known attributes of Apollo. In this case, however, their location

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11 Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, p. 151.
12 H. Knackfuss: *Didyma* (ed. Th. Wiegand), Berlin, 1941.
13 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 175.
14 Ovadiah *et al.*, Deity and Cult, p. 173, n. 41.
15 Magness (above, n. 2), pp. 174–175.
16 Ovadiah *et al.*, Deity and Cult, pp. 171–173, n. 41.
17 *Ibid.*, pp. 175–177. For our treatment of the subject, see Fischer *et al.*, Roman Temple, pp. 166–168; Ovadiah *et al.*, Epigraphic Finds, pp. 60–66; *idem*, Deity and Cult, pp. 168–173. Magness' reference to the Greek form 'to the holy god' is mistaken. The Greek form should be related to in the singular dative, thus θεῷ ἁγίῳ, and not as she has written, *theoi hagioi*. Magness (above, n. 2), p. 175.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
19 *Ibid.*, pp. 178–179.
20 *Ibid.*, pp. 177–178.
21 Ovadiah *et al.*, Epigraphic Finds, p. 64.

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in the entablature, at least 8 m. above the spectator's eye level, and the small size of the reliefs (approximately 10 × 15 cm.) make it almost impossible to see and identify these elements as cult symbols. Thus, we maintain our belief that these elements 'are purely ornamental and do not represent attributes or symbols of any deity'.[22] Beyond that, Baalshamin's image has recently been identified on two bas-reliefs discovered at Si'a in the Ḥaurān.[23] In both, the deity is depicted with rays projecting from his head in semi-circular form. This depiction reflects the clear solar aspect of Baalshamin, without any direct connection to Apollo. This is also apparently the reason that the name Helis, which is a distortion of the name of the Greek god Helios, is associated with the site of the temple at Kedesh.[24]

As for the spring at Kedesh, Magness writes that its location at the foot of the mound connects it with the cult of Apollo, when viewed in comparison with other oracular temples of the god.[25] The spring, however, is at the foot of Tel Kedesh, and not of the hill where the temple is located. This should not be considered an argument for attributing the temple at Kedesh to Apollo. Magness' discussion of the sanctuaries of Apollo throughout Syria and Palestine during the Hellenistic and Roman periods and the assimilation of Apollo to the Babylonian god Nabu is superfluous, as long as the author has not succeeded in disproving the exclusive connection of the temple at Kedesh to Baalshamin.[26] We would like to thank Magness for her effort to elaborate on the discussion of this site, but do not believe that anything has been added that negates our conclusions regarding the architectural design and function of the temple at Kedesh, the identification of the deity, or the character of the worship practised there.

22 *Ibid.*
23 H.-P. Kuhnen: *Palästina in griechisch-römischer Zeit*, Munich, 1990, p. 389, Pl. 19(1–3).
24 G. Dalman: Kedesh, *PJb* 10 (1944), pp. 46–47.
25 Magness (above, n. 2), p. 179.
26 *Ibid.*, pp. 179–180.

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